

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

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INFO AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

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USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 5670

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CB

SUBJECT: REPORT OF SIHANOUK VIEWS ON CAMBODIAN
SITUATION

1. SUMMARY. JEAN BARRE, FORMER HIRED PEN OF SIHANOUK DISCUSSED WITH EMBOFF MARCH 5 CAMBODIAN PROBLEM. HE IMPLIED HE REFLECTED VIEWS OF SIHANOUK, WITH WHOM HE IS IN CORRESPONDENCE. BARRE THOUGHT THAT WITH THE BEGINNING OF THE RAINY SEASON, ONE COULD EXPECT THE FIRST INITIATIVE FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF THE KHMER PROBLEM TO COME FROM SIHANOUK IN CHINA. HE THOUGHT AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT WOULD BE AGREEMENT ON A GOVERNMENT DRAWN FROM THREE FACTIONS: ROYALIST, COMMUNIST AND NATIONALIST. IF SIHANOUK WERE TO RETURN HE WOULD HAVE TO BE NUMBER ONE. SIHANOUK WROTE BARRE HE HAD TOLD KHIEU SAMPHAN 1) HE THOUGHT SHELLING OF PHNOM PENH CAUSED PROBLEMS IN INTERNATIONAL PRESS AND 2) STRATEGY SHOULD BE TO ATTACK LINES OF COMMUNICATION, NOT POPULATION CENTERS. END SUMMARY.

2. JEAN BARRE, FORMER PRESS ATTACHE AND EDITOR OF
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REALITIES CAMBODGIENNES FOR SIHANOUK, CALLED ON
EMBOFF MARCH 5. BARRE IS WELL AND UNFAVORABLY KNOWN

TO USG FOR, AMONG OTHER THINGS, STRONG ANTI-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES DURING HIS LONG YEARS IN INDOCHINA. BARRE SAID HE WAS IN FREQUENT EPISTOLARY CONTACT WITH SIHANOUK AND SENT HIM ADVICE AS WELL AS RECEIVED MONSIEGNEUR'S VIEWS. BARRE SAID HE WISHED TO HEAR THE US VIEW OF THE CAMBODIAN SITUATION, BUT IT WAS CLEAR HE WISHED EVEN MORE TO GIVE HIS -- AND SIHANOUK'S -- VIEW OF THE CAMBODIAN SITUATION.

3. PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF CAMBODIAN CONFLICT. BARRE THOUGHT THAT AFTER THE END OF THE COMMUNIST DRY SEASON OFFENSIVES THERE WOULD BE A CHANCE FOR WORKING OUT A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF THE CAMBODIAN CONFLICT. HE EXPECTED THE INITIATIVE TO COME FROM SIHANOUK IN CHINA PERHAPS DESPITE KHMER COMMUNIST PARTY OPPOSITION. SIHANOUK HAD WRITTEN THAT CONTINUED FIGHTING BETWEEN THE GKR AND KCP FORCES WOULD ONLY WEAKEN CAMBODIA THEREBY LAYING IT OPEN TO FOREIGN HEGEMONY. SIHANOUK SAW NO REASON TO PROLONG THE WAR JUST TO GIVE THE KCP A BETTER CHANCE TO CONSOLIDATE CONTROL OVER THE COUNTRY AND TO ATTEMPT TO IMPOSE AN ALIEN, IF NATIONALIST, MARXISM. BARRE THOUGHT THAT IT WAS DIFFICULT NOW TO DESCRIBE THE PROCEDURE BY WHICH ONE COULD BRING ABOUT A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION, BUT HE BELIEVED THAT ONE IMPORTANT ELEMENT WOULD BE THE AGREEMENT ON A NEW GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNION COMPOSED OF PROMINENT KHMER DRAWN FROM ALL THREE FACTIONS: ROYALIST, COMMUNIST, AND NATIONALIST (INCLUDING "NEUTRALISTS"). BARRE THOUGHT THAT IF REPEAT IF SIHANOUK WERE TO RETURN TO PLAY A ROLE IN THE NEW GOVERNMENT, IT WOULD HAVE TO BE AS NUMBER ONE. BARRE THOUGHT SIHANOUK HAD BEEN TRAUMATIZED BY HIS EXPERIENCES SINCE 1970, PARTICULARLY HIS TREATMENT BY THE KCP; SIHANOUK HAD THEREFORE CHANGED AND WOULD NOT ATTEMPT TO GOVERN AS HE HAD IN THE PAST. HE WOULD PLAY A MORE MODEST, AND REALISTIC ROLE IN A MORE MODERN, LESS PERSONAL GOVERNMENT. BARRE COMMENTED THAT A STRONG INDICATION OF THE NEW SIHANOUK WAS
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THAT HE WOULD NOW ACCEPT ADVICE -- EVEN INDIRECT CRITICISM -- LISTEN TO IT, AND OCCASIONALLY EVEN FOLLOW IT; A CONSIDERABLE CHANGE FROM HIS LAST YEARS IN PHNOM PENH.

4. LETTER FROM SIHANOUK. BARRE SHOWED EMBOFF A HANDWRITTEN LETTER FROM SIHANOUK. BARRE HAD WRITTEN THAT INDISCRIMINATE SHELLING OF PHNOM PEHN WAS VERY NEGATIVE PROPAGANDA FOR SIHANOUK AND HIS GOVERNMENT. SIHANOUK REPLIED THAT HE HAD RECENTLY SENT A

MEMORANDUM TO KHIEU SAMPHAN IN WHICH HE GAVE HIS VIEWS ON TWO MATTERS: 1) BOMBARDMENTS OF PHNOM PENH CAUSED UNFAVORABLE REACTIONS IN THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS AND 2) THE STRATEGY SHOULD BE TO DIRECT ATTACKS AGAINST LINES OF COMMUNICATION AND NOT POPULATION CENTERS WHERE ONE RISKED HARMING THE PEOPLE WHO COULD BE EXPECTED TO SUPPORT THEM.

5. COMMENT. BARRE HAS LONG BEEN AN APOLOGIST FOR SIHANOUK AND WOULD PERSONALLY BENEFIT IF SIHANOUK WERE TO RETURN TO POWER AND CALL HIM TO PHNOM PENH. HIS REPORT SHOULD THEREFORE BE VIEWED IN THIS LIGHT. NONETHELESS HE IS IN CONTACT WITH SIHANOUK, AND MAY ACCURATELY REFLECT SIHANOUK'S VIEWS.
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